

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8609

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: DID SHELEPIN AND SUSLOV VOTE AGAINST BREZHNEV?

REFS: MOSCOW 7395

1. WE ARE PASSING ON FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH FOLLOWING STORY TOLD TO POLITICAL COUNSELOR BY CORRESPONDENT ED STEVENS, WHO HAS LONG EXPERIENCE IN SOVIET UNION AND IS WELL CONNECTED. STEVENS SAID HE HAD HEARD FROM A "GOOD SOURCE" THAT BEFORE THE DECEMBER CP PLENUM, THE POLITBURO HAD MEET TO DISCUSS BREZHNEV'S HANDLING OF FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AND THE TRADE-EMIGRATION CONTROVERSY, ABOUT WHICH BREZHNEV RECEIVED GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM. AFTER HASHING THINGS OVER, THE POLITBURO WAS ASKED TO GIVE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE TO BREZHNEV. ACCORDING TO THE STORY, BREZHNEV WON THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, BUT THERE WERE TWO MEMBERS VOTING AGAINST AND TWO ABSTENTIONS. SHELEPIN REPORTEDLY WAS ONE OF THOSE OPPOSED TO BREZHNEV, WHILE SUSLOV EITHER VOTED AGAINST OR ABSTAINED. STEVENS SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHO OTHER TWO NON-BREZHNEVITES WERE.

2. COMMENT: WE FIND THIS INTERESTING -- AND EVEN
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PLAUSIBLE -- IN VIEW OF SHELEPIN'S EXPULSION FROM THE

POLITBURO AND THAT FACT THAT SUSLOV'S TREATMENT
DURING THE RECENT "ELECTIONS" WAS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN
EXPECTED. HE SPOKE ON THE SAME DAY AS ANDROPOV
(JUNE 9) RATHER THAN BEING PAIRED WITH KIRILENKO
(AS KULAKOV WAS ON JUNE 10) ON THE DAY BEFORE THE
BIG THREE OF KOSYGIN, PODGORNYY AND BREZHNEV BEGAN
THEIR ROUND OF SPEECHES.
STOESSEL

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NNN

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